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During my whole college career thus far I have been a commuting student. Whether it was a 10-minute drive to Cape Cod Community College or an hour and a half to two-hour drive from the Cape to Umass Boston. It has become a normality in my life to check traffic reports and the weather to strategically plan my ride to school. So when I arrived to the UL campus in January and realized my apartment was a 10-minute walk to campus and that there was a legit beautiful campus I was in awe. I had always been a little jealous of my friends who went to big universities, like Umass Amherst or UVM, with their beautiful campuses and campus life. UL's campus is so green and lush. The Shannon River cuts through the campus so there is beautiful walking paths along both sides of the river that lead to some Irish ruins. Also as you cross the "Living Bridge" over to the other side of campus you see how magnificent the newest buildings on campus are as well as the Sports pub where you can enjoy a pint and watch the Rugby team practice. It truly was a whole new feeling attending a university with such a student life and as a non-commuting student.

At UL I took 3 Marketing modules and 1 Non-Business module. The Marketing modules included: Applied Marketing II, Consumer Culture & Consumption, and Branding. For my Non-Business module I chose to take Irish Folklore. The style in which each of my lectures was conducted was quite different from lectures I have taken at UMass. First, attendance and class participation were not graded or enforced. I felt sometimes awkward not participating in class or having open discussions in class. My Branding module was the only one that encouraged class discussion and sharing of personal experiences. Secondly, there were no weekly assignments or quizzes. Each module based your final grade on a group project or research paper and the final. All my finals were essay based which was a little intimidating for me on a count I haven't done an essay based final since my sophomore year. All my lectures were very flexible and understanding towards International students. They were very helpful and responsive to emails and out of class help. My Applied Marketing II module was by far my most challenging class I have taken. The whole semester was based on a real life marketing pitch to Mar's Snickers Irish Branch for their 2017 Marketing Plan. The winning pitch was given the opportunity to go to Dublin and pitch their idea to the whole Marketing division. It was very time consuming, intimidating, challenging and yet also a lot of fun. The lecturer Conor Carroll's whole philosophy on teaching this module was to make it realistic because the class was made up of all last semester seniors. He wanted us to be able to go into a job interview or boardroom pitch and not embarrass ourselves along with embarrassing UL. His class was my favorite. All my classmates that I interacted with were welcoming to me as an international student and encouraged me to join a club or society. I ended up joining the International Society and the Dance Society. Each gave me the opportunity to meet new people in a fun and interactive environment.

Besides attending my lectures and exploring all that Ireland has to offer I took the opportunity of being in the EU to my full advantage and filled my weekends with traveling. In Ireland some of the places I went included: the Cliffs of Moher, Blarney's Castle, Dingle Peninsula, Kerry, Connemara, Tralee, Tramore, Dungarven, Waterford, Cork, and my favorite of them all Galway. When not exploring Ireland I traveled to the following: Amsterdam, Scotland, Copenhagen, Budapest, Venice, Paris, Brussels, and Barcelona. In Ireland I lived with 7 other people, out of which were 5 fellow American International students so it was easy to find traveling partners.

One of the most liberating and probably my favorite parts of my time abroad was the fact that UL and Ireland allowed me to be Katie Nikas. Back in the states I am connected to so many titles or different things. For example, I am Katie the manager of Ben & Jerry's Hyannis, college student, sister, charity event organizer, girlfriend and partner in crime to my friends. It was really nice to just be Katie Nikas an International student over in Ireland; or just Katie Nikas the American traveling. There was a sense of a slight weight lifted off my shoulders. **I would recommend this program to absolutely everyone currently attending UMass. The Irish are so welcoming and friendly. I really felt like Ireland became an instant second**

home to me. Attending UL and living in Ireland has truly changed aspects of myself both as a person, a student, and a future businesswoman. Traveling feeds the soul and breaks down the wall of judgment and fear. Talking, listening and hearing other peoples' opinions, fears, philosophies, jokes, and desires makes you a better person. At the end of the day we are all humans just living a little differently in another place in the world but we joke the same, fear the same, laugh the same, and hope in the same way. I cannot wait to continue traveling and to continue meeting new interesting people. I officially can say I am an expert packer so that will aid in making my next adventure smoother than my first couple times on Ryanair.

